

Furniture fair celebrates silver jubilee

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By Oh Ing Yeen



Goi (left) and Tan say the MIFF is the biggest annual industry show in South-East Asia.

THE Malaysian International Furniture Fair (MIFF) is back for its 25th edition from today until March 11, promising visitors a variety of products with innovative designs.

The fair, the biggest annual industry show in South-East Asia, has come a long way since its inception in 1995 with only 8,000sq m of space to the current 100,000sq m.

Held at two venues – Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) and Malaysia International Trade and Exhibition Centre (Mitec) – shuttle transfer will be provided for visitors between the two centres.

This year, there will be new exhibitors from Portugal, Sri Lanka, and New Zealand as well as delegations from Japan, Canada, and two from Romania.

Continuing its theme from last year's "Design Connects People", MIFF founder and chairman Datuk Tan Chin Huat said: "It is not just a theme. Ultimately, it is the people behind the design."

MIFF general manager Karen Goi said the exhibition was more than just about furniture.

"It is a lifestyle product, because furniture can enhance our lifestyle. Design is also an important element."

Goi said the fair attracted around 20,000 visitors every year. The buyer pre-registration showed an increase of 10% with very strong numbers from United States and Eastern Europe, alongside visitors from Asia.

One of the highlights this year is the focus on Muar in Johor as the official furniture city of Malaysia - Muar Furniture Association is the strategic partner for MIFF.

"Muar accounts for 70% of Malaysia's annual export value, exporting to over 160 countries. More than 200 Muar companies will showcase products, making up half the number of Malaysian exhibitors," Goi added.

There will also be a Chinese traditional art painting exhibition by Master Zhong Zheng Chuan, the first Malaysian artist to have his works listed in a Hong Kong online trading platform. His artworks were also selected to be first day covers in China and France.

Another highlight is the Millennials@Design (MAD) curated gallery and the MIFF Furniture Design Competition, aimed at promoting emerging creative talents in the local furniture industry. The gallery will feature 30 young local designers.

Tan said furniture companies came forward to develop the prototype (by the young designers) to show buyers and the world that Malaysian furniture is ever changing.

"We want to contribute to the industry and nurture young talents.

"It attracts foreign buyers when they see that we put in the effort," he said.

Having to come up with new concepts year after year for over two decades and staying relevant is certainly no easy feat.

Furthermore, with countries in the region such as Vietnam and Indonesia emerging as strong players in the furniture industry, Malaysia cannot afford to rest on its laurels.

Tan said the furniture industry has evolved over the last 25 years, so they had to stay relevant and provide buyers something new to look forward to every year.

"It is an innovative and ever-changing industry; we need to keep coming up with new ideas and concepts, and work together with suppliers and industry players."

Goi said MIFF had invested in overseas marketing and digital marketing.

“We provide latest information on our website, and visit trade shows overseas and meet potential buyers and exhibitors.”

MIFF is among the top 10 recognised furniture fairs worldwide.

Speaking of the strengths of Malaysian furniture manufacturers and companies, Tan said Malaysia was one of the earliest Asean countries to export furniture.

“Over the years, we have proven to be trustworthy, honest and aware of international business practices.”

Goi added that while many other furniture fairs only showcased home furniture, MIFF also showcased office equipment.

Organised by United Business Media Sdn Bhd (UBM), MIFF 2019 is endorsed by the International Trade and Industry Ministry, Primary Industries Ministry, Malaysian Timber Industry Board, Malaysian Timber Council, Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (Matrade), Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board and Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM).

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